

TESTIMONY

SB 370 AN ACT CONCERNING SERVICES PROVIDED BY GENETIC COUNSELORS

Public Health Committee

March 16, 2012

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, Senator Welch, Representative Perillo, distinguished members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Dr. Sally Rosengren, Associate Professor Division of Human Genetics and the Department of Genetics and Developmental Biology, at the UConn School of Medicine and since 2009, I have led the Division of Human Genetics at the UConn Health Center (UCHC). Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding *SB 370 An Act Concerning Services Provided by Genetic Counselors*.

Our unit is currently composed of 3 MD medical geneticists and 6 board-certified genetic counselors that together, during FY 2011 provided over 3,000 patient visits for medical genetics services, including evaluation of newborns, children and adults. These services include patients seen for newborn screening follow up, hereditary cancer, prenatal genetics and teratogen (birth defects) counseling. Of significance is the fact that over half of these patient visits were provided independently by experienced board-certified genetic counselors.

We will soon have the translation of research in genetics leading to the prospects of personalized medicine with the Jackson Laboratories initiative just around the corner. It becomes even more important to recognize the need for the highly trained and skilled professionals who provide genetic counseling.

The proposed language in the bill does not accurately reflect how genetic counselors independently provide medical genetics services to Connecticut citizens. The terms "assistant genetic counselor" and "supervising genetic counselor" are not terms recognized by the American Board of Medical Genetics, the American Board of Medical Specialties, nor the American Board of Genetic Counselors. They should be referred to as "genetic counselors" and "medical geneticists," respectively,

In addition, the bill requires direct supervision of a genetic counselor by an MD geneticist. Given the limited number of Medical Geneticists at the UCHC, this would seriously restrict our department's ability to see patients in a timely manner and would likely reduce the number of patients seen overall. While likely an unintended consequence, passage of SB 370 would substantially impair the timely delivery of medical genetics services by Board-certified genetic counselors and MD geneticists in Connecticut.

We respectfully oppose SB 370 and suggest, rather, that genetic counselors pursue a scope of practice process, through the Department of Public Health as set forth in Public Act 11-209. We expect that this established process will ultimately ensure that Connecticut's citizens will receive timely, safe and quality medical genetics counseling services.

Thank you for your attention and continued support of the UConn Health Center.